



Fact Sheet

South Carolina's Business RECYCLING Assistance Program

Reducing Paper Usage in Your Office

According to the Worldwatch Institute, the average American office worker uses about 12,000 sheets of paper per year. Paper is the largest component of landfill waste, accounting for 40 percent of the municipal solid waste stream.









Businesses spend countless dollars on paper and paper supplies, but often don't count the costs associated with paper, such as the use of a printer, copier or fax machine, toner cartridges, and machine maintenance. Add to that file cabinets, postage, forms, rental costs related to space that houses the file cabinets, any off-site storage that may be used, and waste disposal fees. Suddenly, your budget figures for paper don't begin to capture the real costs involved.

Getting started...

There are several things your office can do to reduce the amount of paper waste being generated. First, you'll need to establish a person or committee who can review your office's waste stream as well as evaluate your administrative and purchasing practices. Once you determine what your employees are buying, using and throwing away, you can follow these easy-to-follow suggestions to reduce waste at your business.




Eliminate unnecessary copies, memos and notes.


-  **Use electronic mail to communicate with staff and clients.** You also can attach reports and other documents electronically that would otherwise have to be copied, collated and mailed.
-  **Reformat your faxes to eliminate cover sheets.** You can purchase stickers to provide "To: and From:" information or just write the information across the top of your document.
-  **Adopt a policy to use double-sided copies.** Get staff in the habit of making two-sided copies. They can even set up their printers to print documents of both sides of the page. Save old one-sided documents to print draft materials on the backs or make them into notepads. You might want these for internal use only, but it's a great way to reuse a valuable resource.
-  **Use outdated forms and letterhead for internal memos.**
-  **Post memos in a central location rather than distributing individual copies to everyone.**
-  **Encourage staff to save documents on disk and/or hard drive rather than on paper.**
-  **Buy recycled-content paper.** There are many grades of recycled paper available on the market. Be sure to look for brands that contain "post-consumer" content.
-  **Set up paper collection areas and develop an in-house paper recycling program.**


Visit us on the Web at www.scdhec.net/brap or call 1-800-768-7348.

Evaluate your documents for reduction opportunities.

 **For larger publications and documents, reduce paper volume by using a smaller font size**, using space-saving fonts like Times New Roman or Helvetica, smaller margins, less white space and reduced images. Use both sides of paper and consider a lighter weight paper. Whenever possible, eliminate paper altogether by posting documents online, sending them on disk or as an e-mail attachment.


 **Review your distribution lists to eliminate old addresses or contacts that have moved.** By keeping your mailing lists updated, you can save paper, postage and staff time.


 **Use your computer for communications.** Contact customers and suppliers by way of the Internet. If your business requires customers to fill out forms on a regular basis, consider posting these forms online.

 **Set up a corporate intranet or shared network drives within your business** to provide employees an easy way to share information, such as databases, manuals, meeting notes or minutes, internal phone lists, newsletters and other commonly used documents.

Setting up an Office Paper Recycling Program

If paper makes up the largest component of your business' waste stream, you may want to set up a paper recycling program. Office paper is usually collected in two grades: "high grade" and "mixed" paper.

 "High-grade" paper usually consists of white copier paper, white computer paper, white office stationery and white note paper.

 "Mixed" office paper typically consists of nearly all paper generated in an office, including both white and colored paper, file folders and manila envelopes.



Since there is minimal sorting in "mixed" paper, it usually yields lower market prices. Both types of paper collection usually prohibit certain types of contaminants such as glossy paper, tape and envelopes with plastic windows. The highest prices are paid for sorted paper with little contamination. Check with your collection provider to see which type of paper collection works best for you.

Keep track of your success.

By reducing paper usage, you can save your business three cents a page. If you use 100,000 sheets of paper a month, you can save \$3,000 a month or \$36,000 in a year. And that doesn't even include your savings in printing costs or storage.

You may also want to determine how much time your organization saves by switching from paper to electronic storage and communication. To calculate how many trees your company is saving thanks to its new paper reduction habits, remember an average tree generates about 27,500 sheets of paper.

Once you calculate these savings, include them in staff communications, external newsletters and on your Web site to let staff, shareholders, suppliers and customers know how you're helping impact the bottom line as well as protecting the environment.